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Night golf event raises awareness of suicide prevention

by Capt. Murray Shugars
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CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION Q-WEST, Iraq – More than 40 participants and spectators gathered in the darkness at the Lone Star Golf Course to raise awareness of suicide and suicide prevention here Sept. 20.

The event, a two-man, best ball game dubbed the “Q-West Dodge Invitational Golf Tournament,” was sponsored by the Post Exchange New Car Sales and included glow-in-the-dark golf balls, a course lit by chem-lites, and prizes.

This was the third in a campaign of suicide awareness and prevention events, said Maj. John B. Herd, director of Morale, Welfare, and Recreation. The previous events included another two-man, best ball golf tournament and a video game competition held at the outdoor theater.

First place winners, Lt. Col. Kerry W. Goodman, commander, 2/198th CAB, and Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Carr, communications noncommissioned-officer-in-charge, 2/198th CAB from Senatobia, Miss., successfully defended the championship title they won during the previous two-man, best ball tournament. For their efforts, they received trophies and Q-West Harley Davidson T-shirts.

The participants found the game challenging but rewarding.

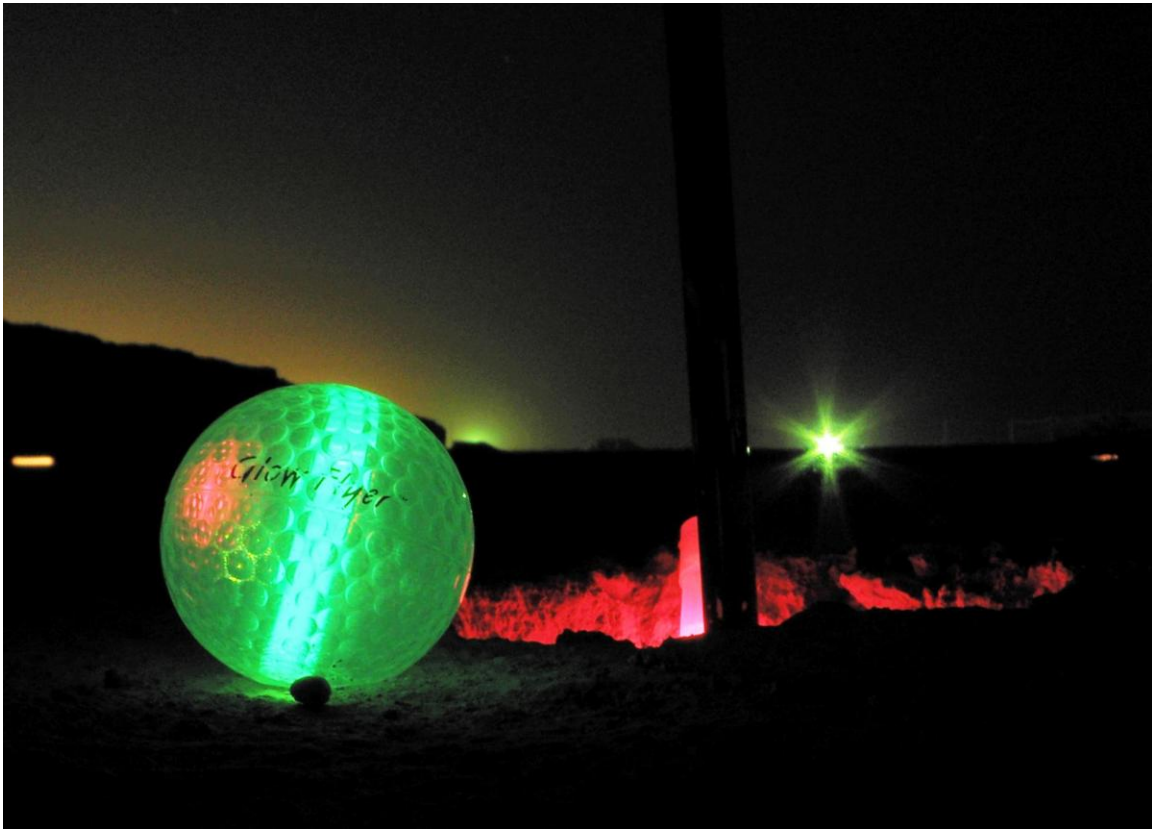
“This game is tough enough when you can see the ball and where you are trying to hit it. Try to hit a glowing golf ball at night wearing NVDs. That was very difficult but a lot of fun,” Capt. Dirk Waldrop, logistics officer, 2/198th CAB, and Cleveland, Miss.

“Playing at night with a glowing golf ball was a challenge. It tested my observation skill and concentration, and I was glad just keeping the glow golf ball on the course and headed in the right direction. Still, it was a lot of fun, and I can't wait for the next glow golf tournament,” said Capt. Allen Legere, officer-in-charge Mayor Cell’s Iraqi Business Zone, 2/198th CAB, and a Gulfport, Miss., native.

“We are trying to make a positive difference in the often stressful deployment experience by using this forum to bring attention to the problem of elevated suicide rates among troops in Iraq. Events like this allow us to demonstrate new ways to build camaraderie, raise moral and reduce the conditions that can lead to stress problems,” said Goodman, a native of Meridian, Miss.

“This has been a successful event,” said Herd, of Florence, Miss. “People joined for good-natured competition while bringing attention to an important issue.”

The Q-West MWR team plans to host several more golf tournaments in the coming months.



A glow-in-the-dark golf ball awaits the final putt at the Lone Star Golf Course during a night golf tournament aimed at raising awareness of suicide and suicide prevention at Contingency Operating Location Q-West, September 20. (Courtesy photo by Maj. John B. Herd)